

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, June 20, 2014

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Action Item Calendar

Today (June 20): School [Health](#) Reports due

Today (June 20): [Roster verification](#) to be completed

Monday (June 23): Academic or [Behavioral-intervention final](#) data due

July 14: [Educator-evaluation data](#) due

July 15: [Housing aid](#) forms due

July 18: [UCOA](#) preliminary data due

July 18: Physical-restraint report due (see [below](#))

September 30: [UCOA FY 2014](#) data due

Notes from Commissioner Gist

- 1. 2,073 high-school seniors improved significantly in mathematics, earned diplomas**

As the school year ends and as our high-school graduates move on to the next phase in their education and in their lives, I want to take a moment to thank you and to congratulate you for your extraordinary efforts in preparing your students for success. We all are aware that we faced some unique challenges with the Class of 2014, the first class to graduate from our high schools under the provisions of the current Rhode Island Diploma System. As you are aware, some 4,100 students failed to attain the level of partial proficiency or better on the state mathematics assessment in their junior year. There were many who said that the test was too hard and that our expectations for student achievement were too high. In response, you didn't step away from the problem – you stepped up.

Across Rhode Island, school leaders, teachers, family members, and the students themselves focused on improving performance in mathematics – through summer courses, through afterschool instruction, and through an intense focus on mathematics during the school day. The result: 2,073 of the students who had been “substantially below proficient” have met the state-assessment component of the Diploma System! Of these students, more than 1,100 met the requirement by attaining the level of partial proficiency or better. Another 500 students made significant growth and about 420 achieved a passing score on one of our other approved assessments. Because of this incredible performance, I am confident that the Class of 2014 is better prepared for success than any previous graduating class from Rhode Island.

At present, about 87 percent of the students in the 2013-14 senior class met all graduation requirements and it appears that another 8 percent or so attained a waiver regarding the state-assessment component were eligible to earn a diploma. Over the

next few weeks, we will collect from you final reports on the number of students who received waivers and on the outcomes for students who have not yet met the graduation requirements (enrolled in summer school, retained in grade, entered GED programs, left school without a diploma, etc.) so that I can make a final report to the Board of Education. As we conclude the school year, I recognize all that you, you leadership team, and the great educators in your schools have done for your students – and in particular for the graduating Class of 2014.

2. Fiscal Year 2015 budget maintains support for education

Despite the challenges of another year of difficult economic times in our state, the members of the General Assembly have once again shown their support for public education by approving a Fiscal Year 2015 budget that increases aid to education. The approved budget accepts Governor Chafee's recommendation of full funding for Year 4 of the Funding formula for state aid to LEAs, and I am very pleased that yesterday Governor Chafee signed the budget into law.

In addition to the full funding for education aid to LEAs, the budget also includes an additional \$1 million for early-childhood education (bringing total funding to \$2.95 million), an additional \$500,000 for high-cost special education (total: \$1.5 million), an additional \$1.1 million for transportation (total: \$4.35 million), and an additional \$500,000 for career-technical education programs (total: \$3.5 million). The General Assembly also restored funds for textbooks for nonpublic schools (\$240,000) and for the school-breakfast programs (\$270,000).

The final Fiscal Year 2015 education-aid entitlements and payment schedules are posted on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/FundingSources/StateEducationAid.aspx>

3. General Assembly considering bills on teacher evaluations, graduation requirements

As the session nears adjournment, several significant matters are still pending before the General Assembly, including bills that would bar the use of standardized assessments as a graduation requirement until 2017 and that would end annual evaluations for most teachers. We are watching developments closely, and we have been in discussions with the General Assembly leadership and with the Governor's Office regarding these bills, as well as regarding Senate confirmation of new and re-appointed members of the Board of Education. Following the session, I will communicate with you regarding any legislation that would have a direct effect on our policies and practices.

4. Warwick student wins National History Day award

Hannah Ellis, a student at Warwick Veterans Memorial High School, has won the Rhode Island Senior Division award for an outstanding in the National History Day annual competition. Her exhibit, "Give us the Ballot!," will be on display at the Museum of Work and Culture, in Woonsocket, from July 8 to 25. Congratulations to Hannah and to her teacher, Ed Kimmerlein!

From RIDE

Legal:

5. Decision issued on graduation eligibility

RIDE has posted the following Commissioner's decision:

By failing to pass a required course, student is not eligible to graduate under district's graduation policies

<http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2014/007-14 Student D Doe v. E. W. Greenwich RSD 061314.pdf>

Early Learning:

6. New child-outreach data system to go live in September

The Child Outreach Screening Program is Rhode Island's universal developmental screening system designed to screen all children who are 3, 4, and 5 years old. The program is implemented by local school districts. Developmental screening ensures that young children are making adequate progress in the areas of general development, such as cognition, gross- and fine-motor skills, social and emotional development, speech and language skills, vision, and hearing. The screening serves as the important first step in identifying children who might have disabilities or developmental delays and who may require intervention before they enter kindergarten. Children who show evidence of or who are at risk for developmental issues and who receive early-intervention services are more socially and emotionally competent and successful with peers in early academic settings than are their counterparts who did not receive such services.

With Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge funds, RIDE is collaborating with the Department of Health to expand the capacity of KIDSNET, Rhode Island’s confidential computerized child-health information system, to include Child Outreach screening results. All children in Rhode Island, unless their parents opt out, are entered into KIDSNET when they are born or, if they were born out of state, when they first visit a pediatrician.

Currently, the Rhode Island child-outreach program has been able to reach approximately 56 percent of our 3-to-5-year-old population. School districts have reported significant challenges in locating children who are not in any type of formal early-education program. But once the Child Outreach Screening Program is in KIDSNET, the program will be able to generate reports listing all of the children who live in each district, along with relevant contact information. This new collaboration will not only assist your child-outreach teams in locating and screening young children, but it will also assist in ensuring that children who may require intervention are connected with the appropriate resources and receive the necessary supports in a timely manner.

Considering the recent research on the importance of early education, the opportunity to close readiness gaps before children enter kindergarten and the long-term individual child and community benefits, we at RIDE, along with our partners at the Department of Health, are excited to announce that the new child-outreach data system will go live in September!

Data and Reports:

7. Physical-restraint data reports due July 18

The Rhode Island physical-restraint regulations require all public education programs to report incidents of physical restraint to RIDE on an annual basis. LEAs must report the number of restraint incidents and the number of students involved in physical restraint in each school during the 2013-14 school year. A detailed incident report must be kept on file in the LEA, and parents or guardians should be informed as soon as possible (no later than two school days after the incident) regarding every incident of restraint involving their child.

Please submit data for your schools by **July 18**, by logging into eRIDE and clicking on Physical Restraint Data Collection.

In addition to reporting numbers, you must answer two questions regarding whether training was provided for all staff within the first month of school (required within the first month of employment for new staff) and whether advanced training was provided for staff members identified to serve as a school-wide resource.

If you need an eride account, please contact the data manager in your LEA. For technical support, please enter a ticket at www.support.ride.ri.gov/tickets/new . For restraint data-related inquiries, please contact Alice Woods, at 222-8983 or alice.woods@ride.ri.gov.

Educator Evaluations:

8. EPSS Final Evaluation Data Summary Report now available

The EPSS Final Evaluation Data Summary Report is now available in EPSS. The report will allow administrators to view the status of all evaluations in EPSS for their school or district. Principals can

access the Evaluation Data Report on their “My Caseload” tab under “Reports.” District administrators can access the “Final Evaluation Data Summary Report” on the “Config Admin” tab. This report will allow administrators to monitor the completion of evaluations to ensure ratings are ready to submit by the **July 14** deadline. For additional information on these reports, please contact Sandra.Forand@ride.ri.gov.

9. Framework for Teaching Proficiency System to change on July 29

The Framework for Teaching Proficiency System (FFTPS) – the online, video-based, classroom-observation training and assessment program – will be changing. As of July 29, accounts currently open and used by evaluators will transition to calibration-only accounts. This transition means that evaluators will continue to have access to ongoing classroom-observation calibration tools, but evaluators will no longer have access to proficiency tests. New evaluators who are accessing the FFTPS for the first time will have access to both the training and assessment components and the calibration tools. For additional information about this transition, please contact Donna.Stone@ride.ri.gov.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>